

Sponsorship is a 'Total Army' program

By Dave Crozier

What makes a good sponsorship program? Or for that matter where can information be obtained about the Army's Sponsorship program? The answer to both of those questions, according to Sgt. Maj. Calvin Taylor, Human Resources Command (HRC)-Alexandria, can be found in Army Regulation 600-8-8, *The Total Army Sponsorship Program*, dated April 3, 2002.

"This is the letter of the law and the way to conduct business today," Taylor said. "One of the things that a lot of the units will do is they will have their own program that they implement which covers unit-specific information. But if I were to help someone put together a sponsorship program, I am always going to go by the regulation just because it is the letter of the law."

Taylor explained the regulation, while it may not cover all aspects of being a sponsor, it does outline in very specific terms what is required to comply with the Army's program.

"The regulation outlines all of the letters that need to be generated and it is very specific as to the timeframes those letters need to be completed," Taylor said. "It gives you the rules for appointing a sponsor. In the regulation it states that a sponsor will be appointed within 10 working days after the battalion receives the DA Form 5434 (Sponsorship Counseling and Information Sheet) that the incoming Soldier filled out at his or her losing unit."

While the regulation is specific as to how the program should be administered, it also states clearly that it is up to the incoming Soldier or civilian employee to decide whether or not he or she wishes to have a sponsor.

"It is not mandatory for them to have a sponsor," Taylor said. "But we have to have the program in place and offer the service to them. If no sponsor is desired, then a welcome letter from the battalion activity commander, command sergeant major or the activity director for civilian employees will still need to be sent. However, no further sponsorship activity will be taken until the person arrives on station."

Even though the program is not mandatory, Taylor points out that having a sponsor and knowing how to sponsor a new Soldier or civilian to your unit is important.

"It is one of the ways that we as a group, as a corps, as a unit, shows we take care of our Soldiers. As a leader you give out directions on tasks that need to be accomplished," Taylor said. "Well, a good leader is not only going to hand out those tasks, but [he or she] will also tell the Soldier what is expected, what is the standard and then will come back and check to ensure the task is done correctly. The leader doesn't just pass it off and forget about it. The

sponsorship program is like that, it helps you to not just pass off the Soldier and forget about them, it shows you how to ensure integration is done correctly."

Taylor explained that another part of the Total Army Sponsorship Program is not just following the regulation, even though he stated you can't go wrong in doing that.

"A lot about being a sponsor is having a common-sense and caring approach," he said. "You need to just look at yourself and ask what I would need to know. 'What if I was married and had children ages five and seven? Does the unit have something to assist my spouse in getting a job? What are the medical facilities like? I have a child with special needs, can they be met?' There are so many different things that a sponsor should consider."

The regulation only scratches the surface and gives you the minimum amount of tasks that need to be accomplished, he continued. But there are other things that can be done and many avenues available to help create a great sponsorship package for any unit.

The Internet is a good place to start.

Taylor explained there is so much information out there on the various *Army.mil* sites it is almost information overload. Obviously HRC is the subject matter expert on the regulation, he continued, but many units have different sponsorship tasks on their sites that speak to their uniqueness. Every sponsorship program can be different depending on the unit, but they must still start with AR 600-8-8.

"It is the letter of the law and you can't go wrong with that," he concluded.

